

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SR-02 ORM-03 AID-20 IO-14 CIAE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 DRC-01 /133 W

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R 301615Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9353

DIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS LE

SUBJECT: CLASHES BETWEEN FEDAYEEN AND FALANGIST MILITIA NEAR
BEIRUT

1. SINCE SATURDAY, JULY 27, BEIRUT SUBURB OF DEKWANEH, ADJACENT TO TEL ZAATAR REFUGEE CAMP, HAS BEEN ROCKED BY RECURRENT EXCHANGES OF AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, MORTAR AND RPG FIRE BETWEEN CAMP-DWELLING FEDAYEEN (APPARENTLY ELEMENTS OF PFLP/GENERAL COMMAND) AND FALANGIST "MILITIA" FROM DEKWANEH (WHOSE LARGELY CHRISTIAN INHABITANTS INCLUDE MANY FOLLOWERS OF LEBANESE FALANGIST LEADER PIEERE GEMAYEL). TOTAL CASUALTIES REPORTED THUS FAR ARE TWO KILLED (ONE FEDA'I AND ONE FALANGIST) AND AT LEAST SEVEN PERSONS WOUNDED, AND IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THESE FIGURES WILL MOUNT AS FURTHER DETAILS OF FIGHTING BECOME KNOWN IN NEXT DAY OR SO.

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2. INITIAL OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES JULY 27 FOLLOWED

FAMILIAR PATTERN, WITH FEDAYEEN FROM CAMP HARASSING DEKWANEH RESIDENTS AND PASSERSBY AT ROADBLOCKS AND CHECKPOINTS SET UP AT POINTS OUTSIDE CAMP PERIMETER, AND WITH ARMED FALANGIST FIRE-BRANDS RETALIATING BY MANNING VILLAGE ROOFTOPS AND MENACING FEDAYEEN PATROLS. TWO DEATHS THUS FAR REPORTEDLY OCCURRED IN INITIAL EXCHANGE OF FIRE THAT RESULTED (ALMOST INEVITABLY) FROM THIS SITUATION DURING DAY OF JULY 27. HEAVY FIRING FROM BOTH SIDES ENSURE, DYING DOWN SHORTLY AFTER NIGHTFALL AS RESULT OF EFFORTS BY FALAMGIST LEADERS AND FEDAYEEN REPS FROM HIGHER COMMITTEE FOR PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS IN LEBANON (CLAP) TO CALM SITUATION. HOWEVER, HEAVY FIRING BROKE OUT AGAIN EVENING JULY 29 AND CONTINUED THROUGHOUT NIGHT, CULMINATING IN SPORADIC EXCHANGES THAT FINALLY PETERED OUT AROUND MID-DAY JULY 30. AT LAST REPORT, UNEASY QUIET PREVAILS IN AREA SURROUNDING CAMP AND SUBURB, AND EACH SIDE ACCUSES THE OTHER OF HAVING PROVOKED THE TROUBLES.

3. BOTH GOL AUTHORITIES AND OTHER INFLUENTIAL LEBANESE PERSONALITIES HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN CONSULTATIONS WITH FEDAYEEN LEADERSHIP OVER PAST TWO DAYS IN EFFORT TO RESTRAIN TEMPER ON BOTH SIDES. LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES HAVE MAINTAINED DISCREET PRESENCE ON PERIPHERY OF TROUBLED AREA (SEALING OFF ROADS LEADING INTO IT), BUT SO FAR HAVE MADE NO MOVE TO INTERVENE DIRECTLY. LEBANESE ARMY SOURCES HAVE INFORMED DATT THAT THEY REGARD SITUATION AS NOT RPT NOT HAVING GONE SO FAR AS TO REQUIRE ARMY INVOLVEMENT.

4. COMMENT: THESE LATEST CLASHES ARE REMINISCENT OF FEDAYEEN-FALANGIST CONFRONTATIONS OVER PAST SEVERAL YEARS, WHICH ON OCCASION HAVE RESULTED IN EMBROILING GOL AND LEBANESE ARMED FORCES WITH FEDAYEEN (E.G., 1969 AND 1970). ALTHOUGH FEDAYEEN-FALANGIST RELATIONS HAVE BEEN FAIRLY EQUABLE - AT LEAST ON SURFACE - IN RECENT MONTHS, LATEST DISTURBANCES INDICATE THEY STILL CONTAIN UNSTABLE AND EXPLOSIVE INGREDIENT THAT CAN HAVE POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS IMPACT ON OVERALL TENSE SECURITY SITUATION PREVAILING IN LEBANON.

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DECON 7/30/75.

GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMBAT OPERATIONS, CASUALTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BEIRUT08947
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740207-0115
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974077/aaaaafzr.tel
Line Count: 109
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14-Aug-2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <24 FEB 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CLASHES BETWEEN FEDAYEEN AND FALANGIST MILITIA NEAR BEIRUT
TAGS: PINS, LE, FEDAYEEN
To: STATE DIA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005